

SASKATOON FORESTRY FARM PARK AND ZOO MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

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Master Plan Objectives

This Overview outlines the concept, purpose and objectives of the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park and Zoo (SFFP&Z) Master Plan proposed to be completed over the next 15 years. The SFFP&Z Master Plan (Master Plan) is intended to be a phased plan moving from north to south through the park. Each phase will involve detailed design and feasibility reviews as funding becomes available, as well as stakeholder engagement. A total of \$1,850,000 in funding has been identified in the Recreation and Parks Master Plan- Facilities Game Plan for the first three years of the project from 2019-2021. The SFFP&Z Master Plan will:

1. Outline a facility strategy, including recommended timing and estimated costs, which considers the greatest overall financial and non-financial benefits;
2. Utilize an integration of botanical, zoological, heritage, and recreational themes to ensure that the Master Plan provides a shared vision for the site by all stakeholders;
3. Maintain a commitment to continued integration of the Commemorative Integrity Statement and historic significance of the SFFP&Z;
4. Continue engagement and communication with key stakeholders during each phase;
5. Explore innovative approaches, such as continued and new partnerships with non-profits to support capital funding and shared advantages; and
6. Consider sustainability, green initiatives, and high-performance construction strategies.

Key Recommendations

1. Upgrade Zoo exhibits into habitats to improve the overall welfare of animals and meet new standards in the zoo industry;
2. Provide natural settings in open spaces and evocative experiences by removing fences and barriers;
3. Have visitors passively witness animals and their behaviors in a non-intrusive environment;
4. Create places where people can explore and discover at their own pace the botanical, zoological, recreational, educational and heritage components of the SFFP&Z; and
5. Create a sense of place and sensory experiences.

The SFFP&Z Master Plan will provide future direction on development of new modern facilities; upgrades to existing amenities and continued support of the facility as a National Historic Site. The proposed Master Plan is designed with a focus on improving guest experiences and animal welfare and will include the following areas.

Entrances and Exits

The entrance to the SFFP&Z sets the tone of the exciting ensuing experience both visually and functionally. The proposed Master Plan shows two distinct entrances and exits to the SFFP&Z; the main public entrance entering east from Attridge Drive, and the secondary public and service road entering west from Lowe Road. Each entrance road leads guests arriving by modes of personal, public or active transportation to the main parking lot at the south end of the park. Visually, the main entrance acts as an enticing invitation for people to enter the park and explore their way through the SFFP&Z.

Functionally, having two ways of entering and exiting the site allows guests to access effortlessly and overall significantly improves the traffic circulation for all modes of transport.

Access and Circulation

Through exploring ways to improve the SFFP&Z, it became very clear that access and circulation through the site is key to creating an enjoyable and more successful visitor experience.

The park entrance as a whole sets the stage for the entire facility as the main meeting place for people to come together and explore the unique mix of heritage, recreational and innovative features that the site has to offer.

As technology advances, there is also a potential opportunity to move people through the site using shuttle systems that enhances accessibility and the overall experience for visitors.

Parking

The new proposed main public parking for all visitors of the SFFP&Z will be located at the south end of property consisting of 430 parking spots. Parking fees will continue to be charged as per the current format. New technologies in parking applications and wireless payment will improve flow. The parking lot adjacent to the admissions building and bordering the roundabout provides 40 parking spots for staff of the admission building, accessible transportation and tour buses. The proposed parking lot will:

1. Create a sense of arrival;
2. Provide options for internal shuttle systems, bus stops, and drop-off areas;
3. Reduce traffic volume inside the park; and
4. Promotes walking and cycling inside the park.

Green Initiatives

During detailed design of each phase, environmental sustainability, green initiatives and new technologies will be reviewed and considered. This will include but not be limited to energy efficient facilities, electric support vehicles, solar panels, wind power, water conservation and reuse, etc.

Building on the City of Saskatoon's Green Infrastructure Strategy and new technologies, future parking lots and pathways have the potential to be surfaced with a permeable hardscape treatment instead of conventional asphalt. The benefits to using permeable pavements in areas with low permeability include improved ground water quality and efficiency through filtration, reducing short-term and long-term costs of traditional hard surface infrastructure development and maintenance and reduced flooding. In addition, park improvements to irrigation systems will incorporate rain sensing technologies, zone watering and remote control capabilities to maximize the efficiency of water usage, as well as the potential of reusing storm water for irrigation.

The SFFP&Z represents a valuable natural asset with significant green infrastructure and the Master Plan will support ongoing protection, sustainability and maintenance of green assets.

Picnicking

Since the SFFP&Z first opened, it has become one of Saskatoon's most popular picnic spots and is also one of the few parks within the city that allows open fire barbeques. In response to increasing popularity of picnicking amongst locals and visitors, the Master Plan includes the potential for 25 additional picnic and barbeque spots in various areas of the park space. In addition, the potential for a multi-seasonal picnic and skating shelter overlooking the pond and amphitheater provides visitors with a covered area to picnic in during summer inclement weather, as well as a skate rental and warm up shelter during the winter.

The picnic pads within the park will be upgraded with unit paver surface treatments, supplemental planting and additional accessible picnic tables. In the past, these picnic spots were so popular that many visitors are trying to reserve the same spots at the same time. To help resolve this, new technologies will allow visitors to check which picnic spots are available in advance through an on-line reservation system.

Community Garden

The Master Plan includes space for the community garden at the south end of the fishing and skating pond. This community garden space offers the possibility to provide visitors a variety of fresh vegetables, herbs and fruits for their picnics and barbeques at the cost of donation. If visitors forget lettuce and tomato for their family barbeque, there may be the option (depending on the time of season) for them to pick their own favorite toppings from the garden.

Amphitheater

A proposed amphitheater next to the fishing and skating pond offers the opportunity for a full calendar of special events and free shows featuring local and visiting artists and performers. The 250 seat venue is sloped on a hillside to provide spectators with a view of performers on stage with a scenic park backdrop of the pond. The seating area will be surrounded with shade and seasonal colors from the diverse species of trees located in the area. The east facing orientation of the stage takes into account the effect of the sun on the stage and audience and natural sound amplification.

Public Park Features

The Master Plan continues to support free access to the park component of the SFFP&Z, (except for the low cost parking fee) with the following proposed and existing amenities being free access to the public:

1. Skating & Fishing Pond;
2. Amphitheater Performances;
3. Superintendence Residence - "Forestry Farm Tea House";
4. Wedding Gardens;
5. Arboretum;
6. Bunk House – Live Artists Studio; and
7. Meditation Garden.

Heritage Features

As a National Historic Site, the SFFP&Z boasts carefully crafted gardens and restored heritage buildings. The Superintendent's Residence, Packing Shed, Pump House and Boarding House all remain in their original locations today. The Master Plan will continue to acknowledge and support the historic significance of the SFFP&Z. In addition to the existing heritage components, the Master Plan will incorporate the re-establishment of some pathways, improved wayfinding and support of the Commemorative Integrity Statement. The Master Plan will be shared with Parks Canada and the Federal Historic Sites and Monuments Board, as well as with key stakeholders during each design phase.

In addition, the Master Plan includes several proposed amenities to complement the historic significance of the site including:

1. Horse Carriage Rides;
2. Guided Heritage Tours;
3. Sutherland Seed Museum; and
4. Blacksmith Shop.

Admissions Area

The proposed SFFP&Z Admissions Center is located in the park's picturesque setting with views overlooking the pond and beautifully historic Forestry Farm House. Upon arrival, visitors will make their way down a grand promenade lined with trees from the main parking area that lead them to the entrance plaza outside of the SFFP&Z Admission Center. Overlooking the fishing and skating pond, the admissions building has potential to include a variety of services such as a visitor kiosk, heritage tours, gift shop, restrooms and food and beverage facilities. The future SFFP&Z offers an array of experiences that range from historical tours, recreational activities, zoological attractions and educational components. Admission rates and packages to the zoo and recreational amenities are designed to be customizable so that guests can choose which exhibits they would like to experience, that best suits how much time and areas of interest during their visit.

“Habitat Hubs”

The Hive

The proposed Hive is the central gathering space, retail hub and feature attraction building within the future SFFP&Z. Architecturally, the “Hive” building is envisioned to be unique and distinct in the shape of a hexagon – like a honeycomb. As airplanes fly over the site, people will be able to look down and see the clear dome shaped roof. The roof will have an open clear Plexiglas cylinder access visible from inside the building and containing the hives for bees to fly in and out freely and pollinate the native plants throughout the SFFP&Z. Within the building will be educational and interactive beehive displays and high tech flow-hives that provide guests with the freshest honey on tap. Visitors will get to experience “breakfast with the bees” as this is the “natural place to bee”. Also unique to this building, will be a patio incorporating views of the mountain goat habitat.

Northern Wilds Experience

At the north end of the SFFP&Z, the proposed 38.3 acre Northern Wilds Experience begins. When in this area, the natural feeling of open space, roaming herds, birds flying overhead and biodiverse landscape is intended to give visitors the experience of being in the native prairies and Canada’s northern boreal forest. It also encompasses the largest habitat spaces at the SFFP&Z, which will be home to the larger northern animal species, including the cougars, grizzly bears, wolves, bison, elk and pronghorns.

Visitors can experience and observe the Northern Wild’s species in their expanded natural habitats up close and in action on a Canadian style safari tour that brings them on an exploratory adventure ride throughout the new habitats. The branches of the mature trees remaining from the original forestry farm creates an evocative experience for visitors to explore and discover the native species of plants and animals within the surrounding large scale habitat spaces. A lookout tower located in the very heart of the Northern Wild’s experience offers multiple vantage points and panoramic views into and throughout the entire natural habitat area.

The Experience Will Include:

Cougar Mountain (Carnivore Trail)

The new 4.8 acre proposed Cougar Mountain Habitat will provide animals more space to roam through the naturalized areas provided. This area will be landscaped to recreate the natural rocky hill sides they would find in the wild. With wide open viewing areas, you will be able to see cougars going about their daily lives, from many different angles.

The Grizzly Bear Habitat (Omnivore Trail)

At 17.6 acres, the proposed grizzly bear habitat space will be the largest bear habitat space in the world. The habitat's natural landscape is covered with native grasses, berry bushes, various woody plant species and fresh water ponds with live fish in them. With this much space, grizzlies will be able to roam freely and even hunt for their own food just as they would in the wild.

The grizzly bear care building is an educational facility dedicated to the conservation and research of grizzly bears. Within the proposed building are washrooms, food services and a learning center where guests can get an in depth look at staff feeding, handling and caring for the bears. This facility also provides a workspace for researchers, scientists and veterinarians which is open for visitors to observe them working directly with the bears.

One of the SFFP&Z's most unique and unforgettable experiences will be the grizzly bear swimming pond. The pond lets guests observe the majestic animals up close swimming and playing in their natural environment, so they can come to develop a connection and an entirely new level of respect for these animals.

Wolves (Carnivore Trail)

The wolves will be able to roam around the proposed 6.2 acre boreal forest habitat allowing visitors to observe these animals hunting for their food. This habitat has vast forested areas which make the wolves feel at home in a safe and natural environment. An interpretive area in the habitat will allow visitors to view the wolves and learn fascinating facts about the animals.

Elk, Bison and Pronghorn (Herbivore Trail)

This new proposed habitat will increase the current space to an enlarged 9.7 acre habitat. As all three species cohabitate in wild, creating a larger natural habitat is an opportunity to allow the animal to naturally engage other species they would encounter in the wild settings of Canada.

Outdoor Adventure Parkland

A proposed new recreational amenity, the Outdoor Adventure Parkland is a sequential experience that tells a story as you walk through about the history of the site. The story begins from the day this land was occupied by First Nations people, to when it functioned as the forestry farm nurse, to its current iteration as the SFFP&Z. The

experience is intended to be exploratory and educational in nature including technology based games, a zipline, climbing and obstacle courses and natural play type features.

Conservation Research Centre

The new proposed Conservation Research Centre has the potential to include the following:

1. Climate Change Interpretive Centre – This interpretive area will educate guests on current research being conducted at the SFFP&Z. Guests will be able to participate in programs where they can actively assist researchers with actual on the ground initiatives.
2. DNA Laboratory - utilizing new hair extraction techniques to support DNA research projects both in captivity and the wild. This program is in partnership with the foothills Research Institute – Grizzly Bear Program.
3. Native Plant Research Centre – In collaboration with the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan and the Meewasin, the SFFP&Z will support active nursery research programs to further research into understanding the impacts humans are having on animal natural environment and food sources.

First Nations and Metis Cultural Area

The cultural space will be an active cultural site to allow us to support Truth and Reconciliation in the City of Saskatoon. As a National Historic site, the SFFP&Z has the ability to tell the story of the First Nations and Metis people and celebrate working together. The Master Plan includes a cultural site in the SFFP&Z and the opportunity for guests to experience the story of the animals and interaction with the natural environment, from a First Nations and Metis perspective.

Education Area

As attendance grows at the SFFP&Z, demand for more interpretive programs and interactive learning experiences also increases. Improvements to the current Affinity Learning Centre will allow the provision of immersive programs in the Nutrien Ark. For example, children of all ages will be inspired by the free flight bird programs where children are in the habitat for an up close and personal learning experience. As the Master Plan progresses and new facilities and amenities are developed, new programs will focus on Positive Reinforcement Training (PRT) and interaction with the animals.

Master Plan Work

This Overview document serves as a precursor to a more detailed SFFP&Z Master Plan, to be completed in fall 2019.

Next Steps

The SFFP&Z Master Plan will include a more detailed projected timeline to identify overall priority and phasing of new SFFP&Z amenities, projected capital costs, funding strategies, and stakeholder engagement plans. Pending approval in principle, the next steps would include:

1. Complete the Master Plan document – fall 2019;
2. Preparation of the preliminary Project Plans and timelines – presented in early 2020; and
3. Capital Budget plan and preparation for 2022 - 2025 and beyond – presented in mid-2020.